9 The Women’s Movement at Utah State University

One day in the fall of 1971, I received a sheet of information from the Women’s Bureau of the United States Department of Labor indicating that women’s groups should be consulted when affirmative action programs are written. I gave it to Carolyn Steel, associate dean of the College of Education. At about this same time, a woman student asked faculty member Phyllis Publicover if USU could offer a women’s studies course. In 1972 women secured input into the USU affirmative action program, and the first women’s studies course was taught spring quarter.

The Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women

Affirmative action violations could mean that federal money would be cut off, and USU received federal funds through both research and building contracts. As Carolyn and I read over the Women’s Bureau sheet, I wondered if we should organize a women’s group on campus to advise the administration, and Carolyn said of course we should. With help from home economist Jane Lott (McCullough) and others, we called a campus-wide meeting of women for February 28 at noon. Thirty-five faculty and staff women and several graduate and undergraduate students attended and, among other things, elected a representative steering committee of nine. The steering committee met frequently, at times negotiated with the administration, and reported back to the monthly campus-wide meeting of women. The larger group named itself the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women at USU. A couple of years later, the nine-member steering committee took over this name, and campus wide meetings were held only once a quarter.

In the fall of 1971, a male member of the administration (practically all of the administration was male) had written an affirmative action program which came back from regional HEW (Health, Education and Welfare) in Denver with considerable criticism. In March, federal HEW representatives would be on campus to discuss a revised affirmative
action plan and negotiate a compliance contract. Our steering committee wanted a voice in these matters.

Carolyn Steel chaired both the Ad Hoc Status of Women Committee and the steering committee. I kept minutes. The university-wide meeting of March 8 concluded: “We are finally joining a movement that has been going on for some time on other campuses. We are not women’s lib; we are for equal opportunity on this campus.” In reality we thought of ourselves as part of the women’s liberation movement, but we did not want to frighten the timid. I personally preferred the label “women’s movement.” Utah’s conservative climate kept us cautious. Yet Utah had an Anti-discrimination Office, established by Governor Rampton in 1965, and bills introduced into the legislature on higher education included bans on discrimination against minorities and women.

Barrie, on the sociology faculty at Michigan State University, wrote me that Stanford had a good affirmative action plan. The steering committee asked Richard Swenson, vice provost, to send for a copy, which he did, and after studying it, he gave it to us. We discussed it in our campus wide meeting of March 8. Swenson, the new vice provost, was the administrator with whom the steering committee dealt. Wynne had known him even before he came to USU because they were both agricultural scientists. When the steering committee learned that at the University of Utah and at Weber State College in Ogden there was an adversarial relationship between campus women and administration, Carolyn asked me quietly whether I thought we should go the adversarial route, or could we trust Swenson. “Well,” I said, “Wynne tells me that Richard Swenson is absolutely trustworthy.” So trusting became our route.

Over the years I had been a bridge between Mormon and non-Mormon women in community work. Now I bridged between administration and campus women. I was also a bridge between administrators’ wives and campus women, because I explained to the administrators’ wives, at a social gathering at the president’s home, what the steering committee was trying to do. They expressed understanding and support.

Early in the contemporary women’s movement, someone observed that some women are married to the power structure. I was married to the vice president for research, but I had considerable power with the university administration in my own right because I was on the State Building Board. Yet my own professional position at USU was humble. I remained a one-fourth time lecturer, which made me professionally an “irregular,” a term we picked up from the Stanford affirmative action
document. “Irregular” always made me think of cheap silk stockings. Considering my pay, it was appropriate. Yet being one-fourth time made it possible for me to remain on the State Building Board without being accused of conflict of interest. In pushing the women’s movement, I did not run the risks of untenured and tenure track faculty women, and thanks to Wynne, who supported me both financially and morally, I had the latitude and resources to be an activist.

While our steering committee dealt primarily with Richard Swenson, it made good sense to visit President Glen Taggart to introduce ourselves and to present to him our recommendations concerning preparation of an affirmative action program acceptable to HEW. I was chosen to make the appointment for an April 4 meeting with President Taggart, because I knew him well. I also knew his secretary, Berniece Brumley, who gave us the appointment for April 4, after we provided her information on the nature of our group and a list of steering committee members. My minutes of this meeting indicate that President Taggart, Richard Swenson, and Evan Stevenson (author of the rejected affirmative action program) were present. The meeting was friendly and quite helpful. Carolyn Steel summarized it as follows:

1. Commitment from President Taggart that this is a serious matter.
2. The Ad Hoc Committee (on Status of Women at USU) is recognized as a viable organization.
3. The administration’s Affirmative Action Program Committee is using the guidelines submitted by the Steering Committee for rewriting the University’s Affirmative Action Program.

We were off and running. Our representatives met with HEW people who came to campus. We pushed for an affirmative action coordinator, rewrote the maternity leave policy, backed the move to get a campus day care center, and pushed for a Women’s Center, although it did not materialize for another two years. Our members were placed on various university committees, especially search committees for candidates for administrative positions. Actually, there weren’t enough women faculty to go around for all university committees and they came to feel burdened. Tenured women were particularly scarce. We also helped organize the statewide Consortium for Women in Higher Education, which kept us in touch with women and happenings on other campuses. We compared women’s salaries and designed strategy for improving women’s status.
Barrie and I constantly shared information. She belonged to the newly created Alliance to End Discrimination, which included faculty, staff, clerical workers, and students. The Michigan State administration refused to make public their affirmative action program. The alliance not only forced its release, but also circulated a copy of faculty salaries which had been published, thanks to “a feisty member of the Board of Trustees.” Barrie sent me a copy of the salaries.3

Here in Utah we didn’t try to get faculty salaries published, but we did urge equalization of men’s and women’s salaries, and in early 1973 the Utah Legislature appropriated money for equalization at USU, Weber State College, and the University of Utah. Swenson conferred with us on how this should be done on our campus, not only that year but in succeeding years. However, secretaries’ salaries did not come under the line item because there were no men to compare with. Swenson initiated a study of USU secretaries’ pay compared with neighboring institutions. USU was at the bottom.4 A petition with one thousand names influenced the state legislature to make a line item appropriation for secretarial pay.

There was also the matter of matrons, who were the women doing custodial work. A representative of the Department of Labor arrived on campus to remind the administration of the provisions of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, whereupon the title “matron” was changed to “custodian,” with women’s pay made equal to that of men. When this matter was first considered, the men custodians said women would not shovel snow and get up on ladders to change fluorescent lights, but the women said they would. They did, and they still do.

In 1973 the Ad Hoc Status of Women Committee began a newsletter, mailed to women across campus. It was put together by Joan Shaw, editor for the College of Natural Resources who later became Agricultural Experiment Station editor. These newsletters, now in USU Special Collections, are a fine historical source of information on the early women’s movement at USU.

Another early effort of the Status of Women Committee was the attempt to get part-time women faculty onto tenure track. Karen and Joe Morse were a faculty couple, both in the Chemistry Department, who had earned their doctorates at the University of Michigan. Because their two sons were very young, Karen was doing research and teaching half time. I asked Barrie if Michigan State had a tenure policy for part time people. She sent me the policy their women faculty had written and placed before their administration, which had refused
to adopt it. With slight modification, we presented it to our administration, who approved it. We could not foretell the future, but as things turned out, Karen Morse became full time when her sons were older, later became head of the Chemistry Department, then dean of science, and in 1989 became provost of Utah State University. In 1993 she became president of Western Washington University.

Barrie also helped us when we learned of sexual harassment on our campus, in the form of male faculty who wanted female students to go to bed to get a good grade. Barrie sent us the Michigan State sheet dealing with this and other aspects of sexism. Karen Morse, Jane Lott, and Janice Pearce (in health education and also very active in Business and Professional Women), worked over this statement. Our administration promptly approved it and paid for its printing. Because it was on green paper it became known as the “green sheet.” We sent a copy to Barrie, and the Michigan State women liked our revised wording so much that they adopted it. This statement received national distribution in the February 1981 issue of *On Campus with Women*, a newsletter published by the Project on the Status of Women of the Association of American Colleges.

Another concern of our Status of Women Committee was recruitment and fair treatment of women faculty. The affirmative action plan provided for a grievance council, and Judith Gappa’s was the first case to be heard. Judy had completed her Ed.D. degree and applied for an extension service position, which was given to a white LDS male. Then suddenly a second extension position opened, and another male, of the same description, was hired. Judy decided to go to the grievance council for a hearing, and our committee assigned me to accompany her. In my view, the strongest person on the grievance council was Larzette Hale. She was on the accounting faculty and, at the time, was the only Black woman in the country both to hold a Ph.D. and be a CPA. Larzette cut through the rambling statements of the extension administrator with terse questions, and she demanded terse answers. The upshot was that Judy won her case, became the new affirmative action coordinator, and received an academic appointment.

For all the effort of our Status of Women Committee to get more women hired onto the faculty, the score card got worse instead of better. Counting instructors through professors, matters stood as follows:

Jan 10, 1972: 487 men, 72 women, women approx. 13% of faculty
Feb. 15, 1979: 503 men, 63 women, women approx. 11% of faculty
The First Women’s Studies Course

Phyllis Publicover of the education faculty received a visit from a woman student in late fall 1971, who suggested that a women’s studies course be created at USU. Phyllis concurred and sent the student to me to see what I thought. Several other women students showed interest, particularly Becque Stewart. These young women, who belonged to a consciousness-raising group, helped us plan the course. Carolyn Steel, Mary Anna Baden in sociology, Phyllis Publicover, and I were the teachers, without pay. We taught the course during spring quarter, 1972, calling it “Evolution of the Female Personality”—not a good title, we later decided, but we lacked imagination at the time and simply lifted the title of the women’s studies course at Cornell. We organized the three credit course under the rubric of SILEX (Student Initiated Learning Experience).

As we got ready, we had to scramble for material. Daughters were a help. Phyllis Publicover’s daughter, Alison Kaufman, compiled a bibliography of items on women and women’s issues, which we handed out. My daughter Sandra took the course and was ready to share her experience of male-dominated education and employment. Barrie sent us the outline for “Sex Roles in a Changing Society,” a new course she had created and was teaching at Michigan State. USU was still too conservative to permit use of the word “sex” in our title, but we made good use of Barrie’s materials. Avril, at the University of Utah, sent a course outline on women, done up in purple ditto, that she developed for her sociology professor (male). She wrote it under the name of Avril Prunella Thorne. Our daughters had complained about not having middle names, and Wynne once said, “Well, you can put Prunella in the middle,” and this whimsy evolved into their calling themselves Prunella I, II, and III, in birth order.

Student Life carried a story about the new course, under the headline: “Feminist Movement: Class Stresses Women.” The article included this provocative sentence: “The course is intended to be an academic one, not a substitute for a ‘do gooder’ organization, or a rap session for frustrated females: though one from which relevant service organizations run by, and aiding women could grow.” To me it hinted of disdain for consciousness-raising groups, and disdain for “do-gooder” groups.

Four members of the new League of Women Voters were in the class, including Janet Osborne, who for her term project drew up a list of non-sexist books for young children, the first such list any of us had seen. We incorporated it into our teaching. We met on Monday evenings from
seven to ten, beginning with a formal presentation in the student senate chamber, which had a large oval table with an inside carpeted area. There were extra chairs along the wall which we needed because sixty people enrolled, thirty-five of them for credit. The second hour we broke into four discussion groups, then reconvened for a final hour. The course topics included the history of the women’s movement in the United States, the socialization of women, female personality, human sexuality, women in literature and media, and women and work. We brought in Jan Tyler from Weber State College to teach the section on sexuality. I saw role playing for the first time, which was done inside the oval of the table, with participants vaulting over. (Not until much later did I discover there is a removable section of the table and one need not vault. After all, how did the custodian use the vacuum cleaner?)

The next time around, during spring 1973, we renamed the course “Evolution of Women in America,” and had two distinguished visiting speakers: Mormon historian Juanita Brooks, and from out of state, Natalie Zemon Davis of the University of California, Berkeley, who spoke on women in European history. She told us how she got the Berkeley faculty women together to seek improved conditions. The most remarkable term project was an exquisite piece of jewelry created by student Judy Curtis. It was based on a female form and made of silver with a stone inset. I still remember my amazement as she dug it out of her jeans pocket to show the class.¹⁰

For sheer intellectual excitement and comaraderie, spring 1974 was the peak. By then the course was called “Alternatives for Women.” Twenty-one took it for credit, plus twenty-two auditors. We met in the “pillow room” of the College of Natural Resources, a room without chairs that was carpeted on the floor and part way up the wall. People sat on the floor with and without pillows. Students kept journals and did term papers. Twelve women taught the course and attended every time in order to learn from each other and the students. They were determined to soak up this new knowledge as fast as possible. Because the History Department had no woman on its faculty, one of their graduate students, Gail Casterline, presented the topic, “Recreating a visible past for women: women in American history.”¹¹ For the first time we learned about Fanny Fern, prolific and popular writer in the mid-1800s, who made more money than Nathaniel Hawthorne, leading him to complain bitterly about “those damned scribbling women.” We learned of other women as well, and of the existence of the biographical volumes Notable American Women.
Besides Gail Casterline on history, other topics and instructors of the course included:

- Wives and mothers: Alison Thorne and Jane Lott
- Women as objects: Pat Gardner and Jane Lott
- Women and health: Jan Pearce and Karen Draper
- Women and science: Karen Morse
- Genetic engineering: Eunice Cronin
- Women’s emotional health: Marilynnne Glatfelter
- A proposed women’s center at USU: Helen Lundstrom, dean of women, and Peggy Menlove, president of Associated Women Students
- Women and the law: Connie Lundberg, attorney from Salt Lake City.
- Employment of women: Joan Shaw and Judy Gappa
- Self-identity: Pat Gardner

Throughout my fifteen year involvement with this introductory women’s course I taught a session on wives and mothers and usually included a bit about Barrie’s experience. When pregnant with her first child, she was teaching “Sex Roles” at Michigan State and discovered that some of her women students considered pregnancy to be treason to the feminist cause. Barrie argued otherwise. Shortly before the baby was due she called the hospital to make arrangements for the birth, explaining that she was Barrie Thorne and that her husband’s name was Peter Lyman. The hospital told her she would have to register as Mrs. Peter Lyman and continued to insist, even when Barrie explained that her legal name was Barrie Thorne and that her health insurance was under that name.

Finally Barrie and Peter phoned a feminist attorney in Ann Arbor who arranged for an item in the “Action Line” column of the Detroit News. A short letter from “Barrie of East Lansing” explained the problem with the hospital and asked for help. It was followed by a response from the state attorney general’s office, explaining that it was legal in the state of Michigan for a married woman to keep her “maiden” name. Sparrow Hospital relented and Barrie entered under her own name and gave birth to a son on June 25, 1973.

A day or so later a hospital clerk came with a form asking for the baby’s name. Barrie said it was Andrew Lucian Thorne-Lyman. The clerk said that the child could only have the father’s last name. No hyphenated creation allowed. Peter arrived for a visit and found Barrie in tears. Once again they called the feminist attorney in Ann Arbor, who said “You can legally call your baby anything you want.” With
that legal reassurance, Peter went home and put on a suit and tie, to
give more authority to his mission, and proceeded to the office of a hos-
pital administrator. As soon as he saw the name on the door, Ms.
Hawkins, he knew he had it made, since any woman listed as Ms. must
be a feminist. Ms. Hawkins assured Peter that, indeed, parents could
name a baby anything they wanted.\textsuperscript{12}

   Barrie also quietly analyzed the hospital power structure. I’m sure
the hospital did not realize the hazards of having, as a patient, an anthrop-
pologist-sociologist. She discovered that the lowliest of employees,
licensed practical nurses, were the most skilled at getting a baby to nurse
at its mother’s breast. The regular nurses weren’t nearly as good at it.

   Here at USU by the time we were teaching in the pillow room,
Carolyn Steel had left our campus for an administrative position at the
Sturt College of Advanced Education in Adelaide, Australia. Before
leaving she strongly advised our women without doctorates to go get
one as soon as possible, from institutions other than USU. Jane Lott
(McCullough) became chair of the Status of Women Committee and
noted in the fall of 1973, that of the eighty-seven women on the USU
faculty, only thirteen had doctoral degrees. The administration had a
newly instituted program of special leaves for women faculty to pur-
sue doctoral work and Jane urged women to apply for such leave.\textsuperscript{13}

   After three years of teaching the introductory course under the SILEX
rubric, we decided it was time to get women’s studies into the regular
curriculum and to add more courses. That USU should even have a
women’s studies program was remarkable in some people’s eyes, given
the conservative environment. Judy Gappa, the affirmative action officer,
and Nick Eastmond, of instructional development, wrote an article for
\textit{Liberal Education}, in which they described this conservative context.

   The campus is located in a rural community in northern Utah. The
leadership of the Mormon church, the predominant religion of the area, opposes most aspects of the women’s movement, including
the Equal Rights Amendment, day care centers, working mothers,
and abortion. In the words of the editor of the local newspaper, ‘It
is considered bad manners to question or challenge established
authority.’ The power structure in Cache Valley, again according to
the local editor, is overwhelmingly male.

   I should pause here to say that the local editor to whom they
referred was Cliff Cheney, a very bright and capable person. Later Cliff
took a position with the \textit{Ogden Standard Examiner}. He and his wife died
tragically in an auto accident on black ice between Hill Field and Ogden. Cliff’s article on the power structure in Cache Valley, published in the *Herald Journal* on April 22, 1997, contained this paragraph:

One noteworthy aspect of the local power structure is that women are not a part of it. Some might attribute this fact to the predominance of the LDS [Mormon] Church values here. At any rate, none of the ten Most Powerful individuals named in our survey are women. Among the top 50 most influential people in the valley are only two women: Carol Clay, Logan city councilwoman and organizer of the valley’s first United Fund drive, and Alison Thorne, former city school board member, who has long been active in local social, civic and feminist causes.¹⁴

We did establish a women’s studies program in spite of the conservative environment, and the introductory course became part of a regular and expanded curriculum. By 1976–77 about 280 were enrolled in USU women’s studies courses, and 80 percent of USU faculty favored additional development of women’s studies.¹⁵

From the very beginning, women’s studies encouraged activism by its teachers and students. The campus health center was appallingly inadequate and our class produced a caustically humorous video. Through the summer students worked toward getting the health center improved.

When Planned Parenthood first established an office in Logan, the Cache County commissioners sought to close it down. Our class helped gather petition signatures to keep it open, but controversy went on for months. Not until the fall of 1975 was Planned Parenthood on sound footing.

Another focus of activism was Title IX, an amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination in education on the basis of sex. Joan Shaw, editor of the Status of Women Newsletter, who also taught our session on employment discrimination, had a daughter, Ethy, at Skyview High School. One day Ethy wore a nicely tailored pantsuit that happened to be made out of blue denim. The dress code prohibited jeans for girls. Ethy also had the audacity to complain that there were too few sports offerings for girls. She was suspended.

Joan Shaw joined her daughter in alerting regional Health, Education, and Welfare officials to these violations of Title IX, adding the charge that pregnant girls of the county high school, who were at the alternative learning center in Logan, could not receive the same
kind of graduation diploma as other high school students. Joan’s
daughter won the right to wear her pantsuit, and the administration
had to do something about women’s sports and regularizing diplomas.
The Health, Education, and Welfare officers who issued this ruling told
Joan’s daughter to carry a notebook and record any attempts by stu-
dents or faculty to intimidate her, but she never had to write anything
down. People at the high school were supportive or quiet. But the com-
munity was not quiet. There was a big hue and cry against the govern-
ment ruling, with petitions passed in LDS Church houses telling the
federal government to stay out of Cache Valley, and urging the con-
gressional delegation to repeal Title IX because it was a communist
plot. The State Board of Education went on record against Title IX and
urged other states to join them—which they didn’t.16

Logan High School’s dress code was more sensible, but the new
Logan School District superintendent, James Blair, made a statement
that women were incapable of being good school administrators,
which brought a strong response from the Consortium for Women in
Higher Education in Utah, and a flurry of letters to state legislators. I
recall going to Governor Rampton’s office to talk with him about pend-
ing employment security legislation, and after we had talked about
that for awhile, he leaned back in his chair and said, “Now, about the
Logan superintendent. I have had a great many letters about his atti-
tude against women in school administration.”

Before leaving the subject of women’s studies, I should mention
that, early in 1976, there were two new sources of material. One was a
recently published book, edited by Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley,
titled Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance, which was dedicated
to their mothers. The other new source of material was Signs: Journal of
Women in Culture and Society, the academic quarterly that began publi-
cation in autumn 1975 and continues today.

On a humorous note, I saw at the bottom of the society page of the
Herald Journal an announcement that I would speak to AAUW on
women, with the title, “Who are we and where are we going?” Just
below appeared this ad: “Going to the cleaners? Come to Martinizing.”17

Creation of the Women’s Center

Dean of Women Helen Lundstrom attended a six weeks institute at
Harvard in 1973 on establishment of campus women’s centers. She
came home enthusiastic despite opposition of Dean of Students Claude
Burtenshaw, who didn't want the dean of women to have any real power. Dean Lundstrom and women students and faculty persisted. Finally the university administration decided that the women's rest room on the second floor of the student center could be made over into a women's center. This room was at the head of the sun-filled south stairs, stairs which had a mural along the wall showing desert vegetation and birds, done by Everett Thorpe of the art faculty. At the top of the stairs the mural showed a tall blue-green saguaro cactus. Past the mural one turned into a long hall, or turned sharply left into the women's rest room. (Years later when the building underwent expansion, the south windows and stairs were removed and the desert and its birds and cactus were exposed to real sky and weather. No one had thought to remove the mural first.) The rest room had a large foyer with mirror and chairs furnished by Faculty Women's League. This became the main room of the Women's Center, and the toilet section became an office. Not a bad arrangement.

Here one must pause and wonder what factors made possible creation of the Women's Center. It could not have happened without the support of women students and faculty, and of faculty wives. The male administration needed convincing, and their wives convinced them, as did enrollment trends and needs of women. Federal requirements of affirmative action and Title IX were outside influences.

Dedication of the new center was planned for commencement of 1974, a time of much excitement since soon-to-be-President Gerald Ford was commencement speaker. Because his son Jack was a student at USU, Ford accepted the invitation. Betty Ford would speak at our dedication, and cut the ribbon at the door of the Women's Center for Lifelong Learning. The atmosphere of the entire commencement was electric because of security precautions. Ceiling panels of the Spectrum, the campus arena, were removed, and officers with guns were positioned there. Secret Service men dressed (so they thought) like ordinary people sat scattered about in the audience. But they didn't really look like your everyday Utah family members. The tower of Old Main, the campus administration building, had one of its round windows removed, so an officer and a gun could cover the commencement march from Old Main north toward the Spectrum. Fifteen years later the round window glass still had not been replaced.

After general commencement there was a gap of time for people to find their way across campus to separate college ceremonies. The Women's Center was dedicated during that open time, in the Sunburst
Lounge of the Student Center. It was by invitation only, and there were more photographers and secret service men than audience. Ione Bennion and I attended together and heard Betty Ford speak briefly. We saw her exchange a genuine loving look with her husband. Then people headed for the broad stairs, ascending past the desert, birds, and cactus. But Ione and I ran up a back flight of stairs, which the ubiquitous Secret Service had overlooked, and were within touching distance of Betty Ford as she cut the ribbon and smiled brightly. Those assembled didn’t know that the furnishings were all borrowed, but the new wallpaper and carpeting did belong to the Women’s Center.

Anne Hatch, who had led the effort to create a League of Women Voters, became coordinator of the Women’s Center, jointly with Dean Lundstrom. On matters of funding the two of them went directly to Richard Swenson, the vice provost, with whom our Status of Women Committee also dealt. Nontraditional (now called reentry) students, particularly women, were an important focus of the Women’s Center. These were persons who had been out of school for a period of time. Some were displaced homemakers, and some were single parents. Both groups needed to earn a better living than was possible without a college degree. There were also women who, though married, had married young and returned to complete a degree.

This was the beginning of a strong trend that Marilynne Glatfelter summarized when she spoke at the USU Centennial in 1988. She observed that in 1976 there were only 150 women over the age of thirty-four enrolled at USU. Some ten years later, in the fall of 1987, there were eight hundred. The Women’s Center also sent out listings of courses offered in women’s studies and kept course materials in its reading area. Marilynne Glatfelter’s courses on assertiveness training and personal assessment and Jane Post’s math anxiety course were taught at the center itself.

There would be other evidences of strength of the campus women’s movement as time went on.